(b) whether the Home Minister in his visit to the UT has emphasized that a few islands be developed and opened to international and domestic tourists;

(c) if so, the reaction of the Ministry of Tourism and Culture thereto; and

(d) the details of the steps taken for encouraging tourism in the UT?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM AND CULTURE (SHRI JAGMOHAN): (a) Yes, Sir. Lakshadweep is having 36 islands out of which 10 islands are inhabitated.

(b) Yes, Sir. While inhabitated islands Bangaram, Agatti and Kadmat are opened for international tourists, Agatti, Kavaratti and Minicoy are opened only for domestic tourists. The UT Administration of Lakshadweep has proposed to open two more uninhabitated islands named Thinnakara and Cheriyam for international tourism and opening of remaining islands where only domestic tourists are allowed, for international tourists.

(c) In order to promote Lakshadweep as a major tourist destination, Central Department of Tourism has offered financial assistance to prepare a Comprehensive Master Plan for development of tourism in the Island. The UT Administration of Lakshadweep is also considering to private investment for opening new Island for setting up infrastructure for tourism as the islands have tremendous potential to emerge as world class water sports and leisure tourism destination.

(d) Development and promotion of tourism to attract foreign as well as domestic tourists is a continuous process. Central Department of Tourism through its 18 overseas and 21 domestic offices is promoting places of tourist interest in Lakshadweep by advertising in print & electronic media, participation in travel fairs, inviting media & Travel Agents and extensive use of IT in tourism promotion.

Funds for the Promotion of Tourism in Assam

1643. SHRI PRAKANTA WARISA: Will the Minister of TOURISM AND CULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) the details of fund earmarked for the promotion of tourism sector during the Ninth Five Year Plan in the State of Assam; and

(b) the effective measures being taken by Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM AND CULTURE (SHRI JAGMOHAN): (a) No Separate funds are earmarked for the purpose. However, funds are released on the basis of *inter-se* priority and subject to availability. Various projects for development of infrastructure and promotion of tourism in the State are prioritised and sanctioned every year in consultation with the Government of Assam for Central financial assistance. During the Ninth Plan (till 2000-2001), 58 projects worth Rs. 1402.53 lakhs have been sanctioned. For the year 2001-2002, 18 projects have been prioritised for Central financial assistance of Rs. 874.00 lakhs.

(b) In the Ministry of Tourism, thrust has been on development and upgradation of various tourist facilities namely, tourist accommodation, wayside amenities, budget accommodation, beautification and refurbishment of historical monuments/monasteries etc. In order to develop and promote tourism in the region, the Ministry of Tourism has taken the following steps:

- A Chapter of Indian Institute of Tourism and Travel Management has been opened at Guwahati.
- In pursuance of PM's initiative for North East, a full-fledged Institute of Hotel Management and Catering Technology has been set up at Shillong.
- A video film on tourist attractions for North East has been produced to give wide publicity to the region.
- Financial assistance for promotion of Fairs and Festivals is provided to North Eastern States every year on continuing basis.
- Our 18 overseas tourist offices are giving due publicity to the North Eastern States for the promotion of tourism in the region.

Promotion of tourism in Orissa

1644. SHRI MAN MOHAN SAMAL: Will the Minister of TOURISM AND CULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are drawing up specific plan for the promotion and enrichment of tourism in Orissa during 2001-2002;

(b) if so, the measures taken by Government and the amount of budget earmarked for this purpose;